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SUBJECT: MFA AND RUSSIAN EMBASSY PREVIEW SEPTEMBER 25 BRIC
FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING AT UNGA

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson.
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) At least three Foreign Ministers from Brazil, Russia, India and China (the "BRIC" nations) will meet September 25 on the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), according to a Chinese MFA official. Items for discussion will include international development cooperation and the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, food and energy security and international financial architecture, according to both an MFA official and a Russian Embassy officer in Beijing. The MFA official noted, however, that discussions may stray "far away" from the agreed agenda to issues of "personal interest." The Russian EmbOff said the meeting will avoid "sensational" topics and instead focus on noncontroversial economic issues. The Chinese MFA official reported, however, that one BRIC member had expressed a desire to discuss political issues "within the framework of the UNGA." Despite insistences that BRIC is an informal grouping whose participants have not voiced any ideas about institutionalizing the forum, the group is gathering momentum as discussions continue. BRIC finance ministers will hold talks on the margins of a November 2008 G-20 meeting in Brazil, and heads of state may attend a 2009 BRIC Summit in New Delhi. End Summary.

Agenda for September 25 FM meeting

2. (C) MFA Department of International Organizations and Conferences Department Economic Affairs Division Deputy Director Guo Xuejun told PolOff on September 22 that the BRIC nations will meet September 25 on the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). Guo conceded that perhaps not all of the BRIC FMs will be "available" for the meeting, but said at least three FMs will attend. Topics for discussion will include international development assistance, international financial architecture, the Millennium Development Goals, and food and energy security. Guo noted that the FMs will also discuss climate change and pointed out that the "current global financial turbulence" has added urgency to discussions on international financial architecture. Russian Embassy officer Ivan Zhelokhovtsev separately described the identical agenda on September 10.

Main Aim is Dialogue

3. (C) Zhelokhovtsev stressed to PolOff that the BRIC forum does not aim to "work out a line of action"; rather, the aim is to engage in "regular dialogue" as developing countries.

The upcoming meeting will mark the second consecutive year that the BRIC FMs have gathered for discussions on the margins of the UNGA. In addition, the four nations' FMs held the first stand-alone BRIC meeting in July 2008 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Nevertheless, said Zhelokhovtsev, the ongoing BRIC dialogue is "very informal" and aims not "to come up with a structure," but rather to discuss "ideas."

"Nothing Sensational"

14. (C) Zhelokhovtsev said "nothing sensational" will come up in the discussions. He cautioned, however, that "Brazil and India are eager to discuss UN Security Council reform and increased international participation at anytime." After recounting the economic issues on the agenda, MFA's Guo noted that "one BRIC member" has proposed to "talk about political issues within the framework of the UNGA." Guo said that, although the four BRIC nations have agreed upon the agenda, the discussion could move "far away" from the original points.

BRIC at Year One Mark

15. (C) Though the term "BRIC" emerged as far back as 2001 in a Goldman Sachs study on emerging economies, the four nations only held the first BRIC forum discussions in fall 2007 in New York. While the participating nations have no plans to formalize BRIC in the near future, Zhelokhovtsev said, "it may be necessary for BRIC to have regular meetings." In fact, he said, BRIC officials will engage in dialogue on two

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occasions in the upcoming months. First, in November, BRIC finance ministers will hold talks on the margins of the G-20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Then, in the first half of 2009, a stand-alone BRIC meeting in New Delhi may host the four nations' heads of state. Hinting at the continuing uncertainties that surround the group's future, he added that these upcoming meetings do not necessarily mean that BRIC meetings will regularly occur in the future.

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